

However, many parties then turned to the “Copenhagen Accord” — its very name indicating its inferior legal clout — and believed that by committing to actions and efforts outlined in the accord, an improved international climate change regime would be delivered before 2012.

Sadly, almost a year after making this commitment, some countries have already declared that Cancun is a likely failure. Multiple meetings executed by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), as well as Mexico as the host of COP-16, have yet to provide the answer on how to approach the big elephant in the room: how can the Cancun conference be sure to deliver what Copenhagen was supposed to, improving and strengthening global implementation of the convention?



It's true, the expectations placed on Cancun are much lower than those prior to Copenhagen. Even the host itself has claimed that this conference is simply a “trust-building COP [Conference of the Parties,” restoring trust among parties that according to some was abused in Copenhagen by not-so-transparent and exclusive negotiations. Nevertheless, Cancun's denouncement as a likely failure has come far too soon. By choosing the right strategy and objectives, Cancun can become an important milestone on the journey to avoid dangerous climate change.

As the country where the Bali Roadmap was delivered in one of the most difficult and dramatic COPs ever, we believe that reaching such a milestone is possible. Important decisions should be taken in Cancun, to reiterate the urgency of the issue, and to set ground for reaching the ultimate target.

A foundational political agreement needs to be put in place. This will be possible if the parties approach Cancun as a roadblock that needs to be overcome, by creating tools and means to reach the real agreement in 2012.

Indonesia was among the first developing countries to announce a domestic voluntary emissions target. President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, following in G-20 meeting in Pittsburgh, the United States, in September 2009, said: “Indonesia will voluntarily reduce GHG emissions by 26 percent from a business-as-usual level by 2020, possibly up to 41 percent with international support.”

The commitment was repeated during President Yudhoyono's speech at the Summit Session of the COP-15.

A letter submitted by the executive chairman of the National Council on Climate Change, Rachmat Witoelar, to Yvo de Boer — then the executive secretary of the UNFCCC — on Jan. 19, 2010, stated the seven initial focus areas and sectors of the 26 percent voluntary target: (1) sustainable peatland management; (2) decreasing the rate of deforestation and forest land degradation; (3) development of carbon sequestration in forestry and agriculture; (4) promotion of energy efficiency and saving; (5) development of alternative and renewable energy sources; (6) solid and liquid waste management; and (7) switching to low carbon modes of transportation.

The submission indicated Indonesia's commitment to the Copenhagen Accord, in particular because it echoed President Yudhoyono's speech at the COP-15 High Level Segment, stressing the important role of Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation measures, also known as REDD+.

However, what has generally gone unnoticed by the international community is that this list of actions is not unknown territory for Indonesia, where responses to the adverse effects of climate change are already daily activities. Perhaps without the labels of "mitigation" and "adaptation," actions have already been developed and taken in response to the critical issues of sustainable development in this country.

Long before our president's statement at COP-15, we had incorporated climate change action into the 2009-14 Mid-Range Development Plan, where climate change was recognized as a cross-cutting issue embedded in at least three out of 11 national development priorities: food resilience, energy and the environment, and disaster management.

A book published by the National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas) in 2008, titled "National Development Planning: Indonesia's Response to Climate Change," or simply the "Yellow Book," was intended as bridging document, including the consideration of sectoral and cross-sectoral concerns in the Regional Long-Term Development Plan for 2004 to 2009.

Following Copenhagen, we developed a National Action Plan on Emission Reduction (RANPE), detailing how Indonesia's submission to the UNFCCC could be integrated into national (and sectoral) planning and how, when and where the reductions would take place. The plan also recognized the potential of Indonesia's reduction in areas and sectors that will require international support in the form of an additional 15 percent reduction.

In order to be up to date and inclusive, RANPE builds on important studies by prominent Indonesian agencies and ministries, such as the National Council on Climate Change, the Environment Ministry and the Forestry Ministry.

All this domestic progress boosts Indonesia's ever-growing leadership role in the international climate change debate. It has also brought international attention to Indonesia's response to climate change to a new level.

Recently, a bilateral partnership was formed between the government of Indonesia and the government of Norway that aims to direct and encourage the implementation of REDD+ in Indonesia. Both countries agreed to a letter of intent outlining Norway's support for Indonesian efforts to reduce emissions to the value of \$1 billion.

Another breakthrough for international cooperation was seen in Indonesia's Comprehensive Partnership with the United States, formed in August, 2010. Through this partnership, the United States agreed to support the development of Indonesia's Center on Climate Change, designed to link science to policy in the context of developing recommendations for policies and programs.

Indonesia's important task of protecting its forests while supporting poverty alleviation has always been a focus in bilateral and multilateral partnerships. The Forestry Ministry's recent action plan to utilize 24 million hectares of the 35.4 million hectares of "open access" degraded lands will be executed in the context of the sustainable development of community forests.

While domestic actions and political commitments top the list of how to make progress in climate change policy, the participation and contributions of all stakeholders will be essential to the process. Significant progress on REDD+ negotiations in Cancun will be an important step toward ensuring Indonesia can reach its targets.

*Eka Melisa is vice chairwoman of the International Negotiation Working Group for the National Council on Climate Change.*